

and Girls Club. In addition, she was elected President of the Yuma County Education Foundation, Somerton's Rotary Club, and Yuma County's School District Association.

Mrs. Bobbitt has demonstrated great leadership and thousands of students are now beneficiaries of her vision of equality and personal best.

I would like to personally commend Mrs. Judith Bobbitt for her tireless commitment to our community. Her life and work is an inspiration to us all.

TRIBUTE TO DENNIS E. NIXON

HON. HENRY CUELLAR

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Dennis E. Nixon, Chairman of International Bancshares Corporation (IBC), on his being selected as an inductee into the 2006 Texas Business Hall of Fame on October 26, 2006.

Mr. Nixon is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading banking authorities. Since joining IBC in 1975, he has been instrumental in the ranking of the bank as the largest minority-owned bank organization in the United States with assets of \$10.3 billion with over 200 full service branches throughout Texas and Oklahoma in over eighty communities. IBC is headquartered in the City of Laredo and employs over three thousand in the South Texas region and in Oklahoma.

Mr. Nixon's approach to banking is based at the community level in which all customers large and small retain the same value, and this approach has been achieved through the involvement of IBC in community service. Mr. Nixon believes in the importance of corporate social responsibility, and has encouraged his employees to be active volunteers in community service with various non-profit organizations. As a result, IBC was the winner of the 2001 Governor's Volunteer Award in the corporate business category.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to honor Dennis E. Nixon, Chairman of International Bancshares Corporation, in recognition of his selection as an inductee into the 2006 Texas Business Hall of Fame.

TRIBUTE TO CITY OF GAITHERSBURG

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate the City of Gaithersburg on its tenth anniversary as a "CHARACTER COUNTS! City."

Gaithersburg exemplifies the six pillars of a "CHARACTER COUNTS! City"—trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. Today, Gaithersburg celebrates its continued success in serving its citizens and teaching its children the importance of good character.

The CHARACTER COUNTS! program in Gaithersburg began in a meeting room filled

with parents and children eager to learn the pillars of the program. In just over 10 years, the ideals of CHARACTER COUNTS! have spread through businesses and schools. Today, Gaithersburg has experienced the benefits of ethical education and has grounded the goals of the City in the ethical framework of the CHARACTER COUNTS! program.

Through learning and focusing on customer needs, Gaithersburg seeks to continue the honest and open communication that has helped it become a nationally renowned city. Gaithersburg utilizes creativity and fiscal responsibility to promote its health and excellence. All of the people of Gaithersburg—city officials, employees, neighborhood and governmental agencies—strive to continuously improve the City through cooperation and an increased emphasis on customer service, which allows community needs to be identified and met.

By maintaining the best aspects of a small town while implementing the most advanced new technologies, Gaithersburg has a diverse array of wonderful characteristics. The residents of Gaithersburg benefit from safe neighborhoods and diverse transportation options. Elected officials have united to create a favorable business environment and to preserve beautiful parks and public places. Gaithersburg is justifiably proud of its family-friendly environment and a citizenry that possesses a strong sense of community and individual responsibility.

I am pleased to honor the City of Gaithersburg for its outstanding commitment to values in its governance and daily life. Gaithersburg is a great place to live, work, learn and play, and I congratulate it on its tenth anniversary as a CHARACTER COUNTS! City.

INTRODUCTION OF SEEDS FOR SOLDIERS ACT

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to introduce the Seeds for Soldiers Act. As a nation currently welcoming home new veterans, we must do all we can do to assist them upon their return. One way to do that is to help them jumpstart their new small businesses.

This bill does this by creating a specialized loan program for veterans through the Small Business Administration, which provides veterans with loans up to \$3 million, allows for debt refinancing, and permits borrowers to defer payments for up to one year without any accumulation of interest. To encourage lenders to provide capital, the program will carry reduced costs and a higher government loan guarantee.

The bill also establishes a vocational rehabilitation program for veterans specifically designed to assist in the transition out of service. The program, which will be established by existing Small Business Development Centers, will provide technical, vocational, and entrepreneurial assistance to veterans to help them use their skills learned in the military to open, maintain, and expand their own business. The bill authorizes \$25 million in funding to provide \$500,000 grants to the SBDCs to open this program.

As a member of both the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and the Small Business Committee, I am well acquainted with the difficulties many vets face in establishing and sustaining small businesses. At a time when thousands of veterans are returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan, we must act in every way possible to assist them when they return. This bill provides the seeds for veteran-owned businesses, so that they may grow into sustainable entities.

I am pleased to introduce this legislation today and wish to thank original cosponsors Representatives EMERSON, KELLY, and MICHAUD for their support. I urge my colleagues to join us in supporting both our veterans, and the benefits that small businesses contribute to our economy, by cosponsoring this bill.

30TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WILLOWS THEATRE COMPANY

HON. GEORGE MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 30th anniversary of the Willows Theatre Company in Concord (Contra Costa County), California and the major, positive impact it has had—and continues to have—in the cultural life of the San Francisco Bay Area.

For three decades, the Willows has developed and produced dramas, comedies and musicals—more than 210 in all—drawn from contemporary American playwrights, composers and lyricists for a mix of world or area premieres and revivals of classic American shows. Six productions a year, for a total of 244 performances, attract thousands of loyal patrons each year. The current patron base has grown to more than 4,500 subscribers, with renewals at an enviable 87 percent. The company is training theater artists, and creating viable relationships with playwrights, designers, actors and students whose work will impact current and future audiences and artists.

Over the past 4 years alone, the Willows has earned 17 awards from the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle. The Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County honored Richard Elliott, artistic director, in 2000 and Andrew Holtz, managing director, in 2004 with Arts Recognition Awards. In 2002, the San Francisco Business Arts Council presented its Cyril Award for Non-Profit Arts Excellence to the Willows.

Aside from its renowned artistic successes, the Willows also is an economic force in the community. With an annual budget approaching \$2 million, the company maintains facilities, employs administrative support staff, and affords the first opportunity for professional employment for many developing theater artists. The company was the first theater in Contra Costa County to operate under a seasonal contract with Actors Equity Association, with as many as 200 or more professional and non-union Bay Area artists employed during a season.

In support of other non-profit arts organizations throughout the region, the Willows operates a Community Box Office service that has

returned more than \$400,000 in earned income revenue to dozens of groups.

As part of its mission, the Willows engages youths in a variety of programs, including a conservatory, a round theater arts and student internship training program. In addition, it offers greatly reduced student ticket rates to encourage family and school attendance at live theater.

With a remarkable record of achievement in the past 30 years, the Willows is now focused on the future. Later this year, the company will expand its operations by opening a 220-seat cabaret-style theater in Martinez, the seat of government for Contra Costa County. Earlier this year, the company completed a 9,000 square-foot production facility in Waterfront Park in Martinez, in close proximity to the 1,000-seat John Muir Amphitheater. The facility was constructed to accommodate multiple performances of "John Muir's Mountain Days," a musical, commissioned by the Willows, based on the life of the famed preservationist John Muir, whose residence in Martinez is a National Historic Site.

These activities are part of the John Muir Festival Center, an educational, cultural heritage and economic development project in which the Willows has taken a leadership role along with its partners—the city of Martinez, the John Muir Association, the National Park Service, and the Martinez Historical Society.

On July 3, 2006, the Willows will celebrate its 30th anniversary with a gala that includes a dinner and a show in the John Muir Amphitheater featuring the Diablo Symphony and performers from past Willows Theatre productions.

I am proud to join in the celebration.

TRIBUTE TO THOMAS M. PRISELAC

HON. HENRY A. WAXMAN

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. WAXMAN. Mr. Speaker, we rise today to pay tribute to our good friend, Thomas M. Priselac, President and CEO of Cedars-Sinai Health System. Mr. Priselac has held the position of President and CEO since January 1994, and has helped transform Cedars-Sinai Health System into one of the premier providers of health services, graduate and continuing medical education services, and medical research. He has proven himself to be a strong leader who gets impressive results. We are pleased that he will be honored by B'Nai B'Rith International with the prestigious National Healthcare Award on June 5, 2006.

Mr. Priselac began his career in healthcare after receiving his Bachelor degree in Biology from Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania and his Masters in Public Health from the University of Pittsburgh. He began his career at Montefiore Hospital in Pittsburgh as a member of the executive staff. In 1979, he began working at Cedars-Sinai. He was appointed to the role of Executive Vice President in 1988, which he fulfilled for six years prior to being appointed President and CEO. During his tenure at Cedars-Sinai, Mr. Priselac has turned it into one of our nation's finest healthcare establishments.

In addition to his work at Cedars, Mr. Priselac makes many contributions to the

healthcare community through his dedication and commitment to several healthcare related organizations. He has served on numerous healthcare related boards. He currently serves as Chair of the Association of American Medical Colleges, and chairs the Health Care Committee of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce.

It is our distinct pleasure to ask our colleagues to join with us in saluting Mr. Priselac for his outstanding achievements and to congratulate him on receiving this prestigious award.

HONORING THE STUDENTS AT HALF HOLLOW HILLS HIGH SCHOOL EAST

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the students from Half Hollow Hills High School East in Dix Hills, New York for their hard work in the "We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution" national finals. These outstanding young Americans placed fourth in this nationwide competition and I am honored to call them my constituents.

The students, Jason Aronson, Matt Bauman, Jillian Bernstein, Eric Bierman, Emily Chen, Davina Etwar, Leily Faridzadeh, Zach Goldberg, Chris Green, Arun Gupta, Jennifer Kim, Praneet Korrapati, Emily Kuznick, Tia Mansouri, Joshua Milber, Brooke Schachner, Stephen Schiraldi, Dana Schwartz, Dara Seidl, Fauzia Shaikh, Kunaal Sharma, Kavita Vani, Alyssa Weinberg and Joshua Wohl, led by their teacher Scott Edwards, demonstrated a remarkable understanding of the fundamental ideals and values of American constitutional government.

Also worthy of special recognition is Eileen Gerrish, the state coordinator, and Charles Trupia, the district coordinator, who are among those responsible for implementing the "We the People" program in my district.

Their success in the competition is also a testament to the excellent teachers at Half Hollow Hills East High School and elsewhere on Long Island.

I offer my congratulations on their success and commend these students on their dedication to the study of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

TRIBUTE TO CHAIRMAN HENRY J. HYDE

HON. MICHAEL T. McCAUL

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. McCAUL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man who has for the past 31 years brought honesty, integrity and distinction to this Chamber, to his party and to the people of Sixth District of Illinois. I consider myself fortunate to have my congressional career overlap with his, even if only for one term.

At several points throughout Chairman HYDE's career, he served in a position of leadership within the U.S. House of Representa-

tives when a strong and competent leader was needed, and at all times he was the right man for the job. He served as chairman of the Judiciary Committee during a difficult time in our country's history, and brought the highest level of integrity to his position.

Mr. HYDE was appointed chairman of the International Relations Committee shortly before 9/11, where he has valiantly led us through the early crucial years of the War on Terror. In his career, Chairman HYDE has worked diligently to protect and expand the freedoms of unborn children, to protect the honored symbols of this Nation from desecration and to protect the freedoms of citizens all over the world.

Chairman HYDE has dedicated his career in public service to ideals worthy of a great Republican, and to principles worthy of a great statesman. His determination to seek truth and justice has earned him the respect of his colleagues on both sides of the aisle.

My single regret is that I only had 2 years to learn from Chairman HYDE, but those are lessons I will carry with me throughout my career. I wish him the best of luck in all his future endeavors.

RECOGNIZING 30 YEARS OF SERVICE BY COLONEL JOHN C. COLEMAN, USMC

HON. DARRELL E. ISSA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 25, 2006

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to honor the 30 years of dedicated service of Col John C. Coleman, USMC.

Col John C. Coleman assumed duties as Commanding Officer, Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton on 21 October 2005.

Colonel Coleman was born 11 February 1954 and is a native of Warner Robins, Georgia. He was commissioned through the PLC Program following graduation from the Virginia Military Institute in May of 1976. Since commissioning, he has completed seven tours of duty in the Corps' operating forces, two in the supporting establishment, and two with the joint community.

As a Company Grade Officer, Colonel Coleman served tours of duty with 2nd Battalion, 1st Marines, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, and with 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines. Assignments during these tours included Rifle Platoon Commander, 81mm Mortar Platoon Commander, Company Executive Officer, Assistant Battalion Operations Officer, H&S Company Commander, Rifle Company Commander, Weapons Company Commander, and Rifle Company Inspector/Instructor. In addition to these assignments, he served in the supporting establishment as the Training Support Officer, Officer Candidate School, and as a Company Grade Monitor, Headquarters Marine Corps.

As a Field Grade Officer, Colonel Coleman served tours of duty with 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, 2nd and 6th Marine Regimental Headquarters, 1st and 2nd Marine Division Headquarters, and I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters. Assignments during these tours included Battalion Operations Officer, Battalion Executive